

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 259 336

CS 209 028

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TITLE False Start for Africa's Press: An Inquiry into Failures of Media Development.
PUB DATE 5 Aug 85
NOTE 37p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (68th, Memphis, TN, August 3-6, 1985).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Colonialism; Communication (Thought Transfer); *Developing Nations; Economics; Government Role; Influences; *Media Research; Models; Modernization; Nationalism; News Media; *Newspapers; Political Influences; *Self Determination; Theories
IDENTIFIERS *Africa; Europe; Journalism History; *Media Role

ABSTRACT

Noting that the past 20 years have been disappointing for Africa as the economies and political systems of promising newly independent African nations have fallen into decline or disruption, this paper attempts to explain why the African press suffered a "false start" in facilitating these nations' emergence into the modern world. Arguing that the newspapers of Africa have been both an instrument of politics and a victim of political coercion and repression, the paper evaluates several problems faced by the African press. The first section of the paper gives a brief overview of the African press under colonialism, including trends in ownership and control of newspapers. The second section looks at Africa following the independence of many of its countries, and the effect of independence on Africa's journalism. The third section proposes an explanation for the false start of the African press, noting that most African papers are European or based on European models, and those that were indigenous failed to survive the transition to independence. The fourth section of the paper examines failures in communication and development, discussing certain trends--identified as the dominant paradigm of modernization and diffusion, critical theory, dependency--in their relationship to the African press situation. The paper concludes that Westerners expected too much too soon from Africa's press, that Africa needs more time to enter the modern world, and that when it does, it will be on Africa's terms and not on those of the western world. (HTH)

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FALSE START FOR AFRICA'S PRESS:

AN INQUIRY INTO FAILURES OF MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

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A Paper Submitted to the International Communication Division for the ARMC
Meeting in Memphis, TN, August 5, 1985

ED259336

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FALSE START FOR AFRICA'S PRESS: AN INQUIRY INTO FAILURES OF MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

One hundred years ago, in Berlin in 1885, the great powers of Europe -- Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, and Italy -- met to carve up Africa among themselves. In so doing, and without any Africans being present, they drew boundaries that demarcate African nations today. In the turbulent years since, Africa has undergone 75 years of colonialism and, since about 1960, a quarter of a century of political independence.

During those 100 years, mass media came to Africa -- first, newspapers and magazines, then radio and motion pictures, and finally television.

The ups and downs of the African news media and the ways journalists there have dealt with the changing political and social conditions of the continent have been followed and noted by scholars, journalists and others.¹ The final years of colonial rule with their nationalist and independence movements; the realization of political independence under one-party rule or often military authoritarianism; and then economic false starts and reversals, coups d'etat and political instability--all this political and social change in recent African history has had a direct impact on journalism and the mass media.

The early 1960s was a time of great expectations for the newly independent nations of Africa. Decolonization was almost completed and Africa was poised for the "take-off" to modernity and several of its leading nations -- Ghana, Nigeria, and Tanzania in particular -- were expected by many to take influential places among the great nations of the world. U.S. social scientists confidently proposed that mass media -- the "magic multipliers" -- could markedly facilitate and ease the great ascent to modernization and economic development of the new nations. But the last 20 years have been disappointing and disillusioning ones

for Africa and its supporters.² And Africa's false start has also proved disillusioning for a wide range of academic theorists who had offered a wide variety of explanations for the ways that communication affects social change.

Ghana, which some thought would unite and lead all of Africa under its charismatic leader, Kwame Nkrumah, is today prostrate, due in part to policies initiated by Nkrumah. Nigeria, riding the crest of a wave of oil wealth, had serious pretensions of becoming a major world power. Today, Nigeria is once again "in the hands of the soldiers," its economy in shambles and its attempts at democracy wrecked by corruption and ineffective government. And Tanzania's bold experiment in African socialism has foundered as well, leaving that nation beset with deep economic problems. And all across the vast continent, many other nations have lower living standards today than they had at independence.

The new African nations, with few exceptions, such as Ivory Coast, Kenya and Cameroon, have not prospered and neither have their news media.

What went wrong? Why have newspapers and other media not grown and prospered in Africa?

In this paper, several answers to that question will be offered. The reasons for the "false start" in press development will be discussed in the context of an examination of the role that the press has played in modern African history. A central thesis is that the newspapers of Africa have been both an instrument of politics and a victim of political coercion and repression. Further, the best and most effective newspapers in both the colonial and independence period have been "European" newspapers.

To understand the "false start" of Africa's press, it is useful to understand the part the press has played in recent African history. That role, it will be argued, would seem to be at odds with what various scholars have

written about the theory of communication and development. For in a very real sense, the non-European or indigenous African press has "never had a chance," and perhaps was an ephemeral phenomenon of the pre-independence years. Economic and political strictures and barriers have seriously inhibited and blocked the growth of vigorous, independent African newspapers.

The newspaper is both the standard of measurement and the focus of this paper. For even in this technetronic age of television and other electronic media, computers, and communication satellites, the newspaper is still the principal medium for conveying significant amounts of news and public information in Africa. Radio has been important for Africa because it reaches remote areas hitherto untouched by mass communication, but it remains primarily a headline or bulletin service while television, limited to the major cities, and has so far played a minor role as a news medium. Broadcasting has supplemented but not replaced the printed word in Africa. And modern media in general have supplemented but not replaced interpersonal and traditional means of communication in Africa.

For our purposes, a "good" or effective newspaper is defined as one that provides a wide range of news and public information that is relevant to the interests and needs of its real or potential readers. And to provide such useful information and news, such newspapers must be relatively independent of government or official controls. This study, then, is about the fate of independent newspapers. As Albert Camus said, "a free press can of course be good or bad, but certainly without freedom, it will never be anything but bad. Freedom is nothing but a chance to be better; whereas, enslavement is certainty of the worse."³ The phrase "free press" connotes a certain ideological bias: as we will use instead the term "independent newspapers"---publications that are

relatively independent of official or government control, coercion or harassment. Such a definition, it can be argued, accepts a Western normative view of the press. That is true but most African journalists, even those on government newspapers, hold similar values about the role of the press. Therefore, newspapers under direct government control or operating under official ownership are not considered effective newspapers as here defined.

Most examples and references will be drawn from anglophonic Africa---those dozen countries that were once under British rule.

The paper is divided into these sections:

1. A brief overview of the press under colonialism. Trends in ownership and control of newspapers as well as actual total numbers of newspapers at various times will be considered.

2. Post independence Africa and its impact on African journalism.

3. A proposed explanation for the false start of the African press.

Newspapers in Africa are seen as essentially European transplants and imports that have only flourished in neo-colonial and capitalistic urban settings such as Nairobi, Ab'djan, Salisbury, Dakar, Johannesburg and Lagos. Such factors as private ownership, European models and journalists, foreign investment and expertise, all seem to have been important influences in producing viable newspapers. Africa's few "good" or effective newspapers are seen as an aspect of European cultural transfer. Further, most indigenous newspapers failed to survive the transition to independence.

4. Failures of communication and development theory. Certain trends identified as the dominant paradigm of modernization and diffusion, critical theory, dependency, etc. will be discussed in their relationship to the African press situation.

THE PRESS UNDER COLONIALISM

Communication is not new to Africa. African peoples, despite their great linguistic and ethnic diversity, have been communicating among themselves for a long time.

The mass media, however, are not indigenous to Africa. The printing presses and newspapers, and later the radio receivers and transmitters, the cinema projectors and the motion pictures, and finally television, all initially came from Europe with the Europeans. At first, newspapers and broadcasting facilities were largely established for the convenience and use of the colonizers and the scattered European settlers who followed. In most places, Africans were an "eavesdropping" audience. Yet despite many obstacles, newspapers have been published by Africans for decades. British West Africa (Nigeria, Ghana, the Gambia, and Sierra Leone) has had a long and honorable newspaper tradition that extends back into the 19th century. These early African newspapers fanned the flames of nationalism and later, independence movements, not only in West Africa but also in East, Central and South Africa as well.⁴

But during the colonial era, roughly from 1885 to 1960, the most important and dominant newspapers were European publications. The East African Standard group had the leading newspapers in the British territories of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. And these papers spoke for and represented the interests of the British settlers showing little concern for the Africans. The (Charles de) Breteuil papers, mouthpieces of French rule, dominated the vast but thinly populated colonies of French West Africa, with Paris-Dakar, Abidjan-Matin, and Bingo, a European-style monthly magazine.

In the 1950s, European domination of the economic and cultural life of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (later to become Zambia, Zimbabwe, and

Malawi) was reflected in its press. Most newspapers and periodicals, including those intended for Africans, were European enterprises. Argus South African Newspapers controlled the Rhodesian Herald and Sunday Mail of Salisbury, The Chronicle and Sunday News of Bulawayo, and the Umtali Post until Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980.

In South Africa itself throughout most of this century, the Argus group and other British newspaper proprietors, notably the SAAN group, developed the best newspapers on the continent -- based on private ownership and English newspaper know-how and traditions. That tradition continues today through the two newspapers groups, Argus and SAAN, and their leading publications including The Star of Johannesburg and the Cape Times and Argus of Cape Town.⁵

A major and lasting influence on anglophone West African journalism came in the late 1940s with the entry of London Mirror group of newspapers run by the redoubtable Cecil King. The Daily Times and Sunday Times of Lagos, the Gold Coast Daily Graphic and Sunday Mirror of Accra in the Gold Coast (later Ghana) and Sierra Leone Daily Mail in Freetown, dominated their areas in circulation and influence. Moreover, their Fleet Street style of tabloid journalism provided a model of journalism that is still emulated today.

Other British influences came from the Thomson group which also owned newspapers in West Africa and from the Lonrho group which owned newspapers in Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Zambia.

Although most of these privately owned European enterprises were in time taken over by the independent African governments, they made an indelible and lasting impact on anglophone African journalism. In a real sense, these European papers "invented" African journalism. And the small African-owned papers, established to aid fledgling political parties in the pre-independence

days, were modelled on British papers. Examples were the political papers of Nkrumah's CPP in the Gold Coast and Nnamdi Azikiwe's group in Nigeria.⁶

Today, the government or party-owned newspapers of anglophonic Africa still reflect in format, style of writing, the practices of British popular journalism.

And by the same token *Fraternite-Matin* of Abidjan and *Le Soleil* of Dakar still have the look and feel of a provincial newspaper of France.

But even though those early papers were published by colonialists for colonialists and reflected the unattractive aspects of colonialism, they did bequeath to these fledgling nations a tradition of independent newspapers serving the people. Further, numerous anglophone African journalists did inherit, and gave professional allegiance, to British traditions of freedom of the press. The African nationalists in British Africa were claiming all the rights of Englishmen, and these included the right to speak and print one's grievances without government interference.

So, by the end of colonial rule, there was at least the hope of expanding this fragile and incipient tradition of African journalism and of producing vigorous, independent newspapers that spoke for the new Africa. That hope has not been realized.

KEEPING A COUNT OF NEWSPAPERS

Total numbers of newspapers have not increased markedly in Africa over the past generation and with estimates ranging anywhere from 150 to 250 dailies, Africa's share of the total of over 8,000 dailies in the world has remained small indeed. But even establishing just how many daily newspapers there have been at various periods since 1950 is difficult because reliable social

statistics are hard to come by for Africa. What follows is a comparison drawn from several sources. (In doing this count, I have not included the offshore islands of Mauritius and the Malagasy Republic nor Egypt, which is usually considered part of the Middle East.)

In 1956, Helen Kitchen provided the first careful country-by-country listing of newspapers in Africa and her count turned up 100 daily newspapers.⁷

(In 1960, Arno Huth reported there were 220 to 250 newspapers in Africa and quoted UN sources as saying there were 250 dailies, but no detailed country by country count can locate this many dailies.⁸ So these figures must be considered unreliable, probably overly generous estimates.)

In 1966, a survey by the U.S. Information Agency, ten years after Kitchen, found a total of 150 dailies among the same countries.⁹

By 1969, Hachten reported a total of 160 daily papers.¹⁰

A few years later, in 1975-76, Frank Barton, a leading authority on the African press, wrote that there were only 116 dailies on the continent.¹¹

Finally, as of 1980, the World Press Encyclopedia came up with a total of 124 daily newspapers.¹² In this count, just three countries, (South Africa with 21 dailies, Nigeria with 21, and Morocco with 10) accounted for almost half of the total among the 38 nations included in the count.

From these sources, several conclusions emerge:

1. The pattern of daily newspaper expansion and contraction over almost 30 years: totals of 100, 150, 160, 116, and 124 dailies, shows a brief period of growth during the first years of independence and then a diminishing number of dailies during the past decade or so.

2. However, among most countries there has been a discernible stability in the numbers of daily newspapers since Kitchen surveyed the African press in 1956.

Here for the years of 1956 (Kitchen), 1966 (USIA 1966), and 1980 (Kurian) are the number of dailies for certain key nations of Africa:

Algeria, 9, 4, 4.

Ghana, 4, 3, 4.

Kenya, 3, 6, 3.

Sierra Leone, 3, 1, 1.

Nigeria, 11, 18, 21.

South Africa, 17, 23, 21.

Tanzania, 2, 4, 3.

Ivory Coast, 1, 2, 1.

Liberia, 1, 2, 2.

Senegal, 1, 2, 1.

Morocco, 9, 9, 10.

Zambia, 1, 1, 2.

Zimbabwe, 2, 4, 2.

Uganda, 3, 4, 1.

3. Clearly the daily press, in quantitative terms, has not expanded in Africa. But then why should it have? Well, most Africans and students of Africa believed the press would multiply once political independence was achieved and the yoke of colonialism was removed.

On the eve of independence, the press of colonial Africa was considered primarily a European institution that did little to serve the interests or needs of the great African majority. Surely, it was felt, with Africans running their own affairs and with majority rule based on popular support, the press and mass communications would expand and thrive along with the young nations themselves. The fledgling governments promised extensive literacy programs and schooling.

The independence movement, it was thought, had fostered widespread interest in news and public affairs among Africans. These expectations have not been borne out and the press has not prospered, just as the new nations themselves have not prospered.

NEWSPAPERS DURING THE 1960S

The decade of 1960-1970 was a crucial one for the press of Africa. As political independence came to colony after colony, the need for more newspapers seemed obvious. Instead, newspapers remained small and undercapitalized; circulations limited and advertising revenue sparse; trained journalists were hard to come by and potential readership was sharply constrained by illiteracy and poverty.

By the late 1960s, Daniel Nelson, editor of *The People of Uganda*, wrote, "What is noteworthy is not that a few papers have been born or that circulations have been going up but that so few newspapers have been born and that sales have increased so little."¹³

Nevertheless, important changes took place in the patterns of ownership and control of newspapers. The new African governments themselves assumed a large degree of ownership of both the press and electronic media, a pattern that was to affect the African press to this day.

Increasing government involvement was evident in several trends of the 1960s: a decline in the number of independent newspapers (both African and European-owned); expansion of government ministries of information; nationalization of radio and television broadcasting services (where not already the case); and widespread establishment of government news agencies that would control news flow in and out of the new nations.

Numbers of newspapers were clearly in decline and perhaps for obvious reasons: the consolidating tendencies of one-party or military rule with its concomitant suspicion of dissidence and criticism along with a demand for conformity; Africa's mistrust of foreign ownership of newspapers; and the lack both of capital and of entrepreneurs willing to risk newspaper publication in the newly independent nations.

Scarcely any new independent papers were launched and there was a steady attrition of those that remained. Two of the London Mirror group's papers, Daily Mail of Freetown and Daily Graphic of Accra, each the dominant paper in its country, were sold to the governments of Sierra Leone and Ghana, respectively.

A few years later, the third Mirror paper, the successful Daily Times of Lagos, ended up in the control of the Nigerian government. After the military coup of 1966, Lord Thomson of Fleet closed down his lively Daily and Sunday Express of Lagos which were gaining circulation while rapidly losing money.¹⁴

During those optimistic first years of independence, the proliferation of government newspapers was the most significant trend in African journalism. In Nigeria, the Federal government established its own group, the Morning Post and Sunday Post in Lagos, and each of the old regional governments did likewise: Daily Sketch and Sunday Sketch in the Western Region, the New Nigerian in the North, and in the Eastern Region, the Nigerian Outlook, which briefly became the Biafra Sun during the civil war.

In Abidjan, the Ivorian government's attractive offset daily, *Fraternité-Matin*, replaced de Breteuil's ailing *Abidjan-Matin*. In Tanzania, *The Nationalist* was launched as a TANU party organ and later, *The Tanganyika Standard*, the old settler-owned paper, was nationalized as *The Standard* and made

an official government newspaper. After independence, the Zambian government took over the Central Africa Mail and turned it into the Zambia Mail. The other daily, Times of Zambia, also became state controlled.

By 1970, the new look of African journalism became clear: government or party-controlled newspapers had taken center stage; white-owned newspapers gradually faded away, except in Kenya, Rhodesia, and South Africa; the few independent African-owned papers, such as the West African Pilot and Nigerian Tribune of Nigeria, and The Pioneer of Kumasi, Ghana, were barely hanging on while many small, irregular publications disappeared along with political oppositions. In independent Black Africa, Nairobi remained something of an exception: two foreign-owned dailies continued to flourish under the one-party government of Jomo Kenyatta.

Political conditions in independent Africa were simply not conducive to the growth of vigorous, independent newspapers. The African press before independence was lively and partisan, nurtured by nationalism and the independence movements, but the new governments that followed did not want outspoken and critical papers that challenged government leaders and policies.

The self-conscious one-party government showed little tolerance for dissent and criticism. In Ghana, for example, Nkrumah bought out the Daily Graphic and made it a government publication; he shut down The Pioneer of Kumasi, an independent African critic and jailed its editor and also started his own government newspaper, the Ghanaian Times. Journalists in Ghana, and elsewhere, became subservient civil servants, doing the bidding of politicians.

Similar onslaughts against the press occurred in Uganda where Idi Amin literally killed off newspaper editors and reporters, along with many thousands of Ugandans. Newspapers not directly under government control were harassed in

various ways as in Zambia, Rhodesia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, etc. and their editors often forced out of their jobs and into exile.

Political intrusion into newspaper editorial operations made it increasingly difficult for journalists to do their jobs. As a result, a large number of experienced and talented African newsmen left journalism. By the late 1960s, London harbored a large number of former African newsmen forced to quit their jobs and go abroad. Turnover of editorships on African newspapers was particularly high -- for example, after each successive coup in Ghana, the top editors of the papers were fired as the papers suddenly switched their support to the latest group of unelected rulers.¹⁵

Africa's hopes for an independent press really disappeared along with legitimate political oppositions. The right of the press to criticize public officials and their policies is directly linked to opposition political parties or interests. If there was a legitimate "loyal opposition," in or out of a parliament, then the press enjoyed the privilege of reporting what that opposition had to say. But under one-party or military rule, oppositions were not tolerated nor was vigorous press reporting.

For the new African governments, often tribally based oligarchies, were usually arbitrary and not constitutional governments. Civil rights and property rights were not protected by law, but instead were subject to the whims of political expediency. African governments have shown little tolerance or concerns for minorities, especially if those minorities represented different ethnic or tribal groups. And most political oppositions, such as the Ndebele in Zimbabwe or the Ibos in Nigeria, were at various times tribally based.

Independent newspapers can only survive if they are protected by law. But African societies have not provided such a shield and hence, press freedom has

been almost non-existent in Africa. In 1982, journalist David Lamb summarized what happened to the press of Africa: "In almost every country of Africa, the prime role of the media is to serve the government, not to inform the people. This press is a propaganda vehicle, used to manipulate and organize and control; any questioning voice is a potential threat and only the government is wise enough to know what the people need to know. Here's how an official communique from the Republic of Somalia defines the role of the press: 'It is the function of the nation's mass communication media to weld the entire community into a single entity, a people of the same mind and possessed of the same determination to safeguard the national interests.'"¹⁶

In the first years of independence, well before other problems began to surface in Africa, the free or independent press was the first of Western-style institutions to fall. Lamb said the controlled press was the tool the governments most needed to manipulate the minds of the uneducated masses. "News was censored and managed to the point that what got into print was little more than government press releases," Lamb wrote.¹⁷

The new African governments were free from the colonial controls exercised from London, Paris, Brussels, Lisbon, etc.; they were indeed governments formed by leaders from the African majorities in each new nation (although this "majority" was often based on the dominant ethnic group such as the Kikuyus in Kenya). But at the same time, there was probably less freedom at the individual level than there was under colonial rule. British colonial administrators were, by and large, more tolerant of dissident newspapers than were rulers of the new one party states.

The frustration of African journalists was well expressed by a leading Kenyan editor, Hilary Ng'weno:

"In respect to the all-pervading power of the government, nothing has really changed from the bad old days of colonialism. Only the actors have changed; the play remains the same. Instead of a colonial governor you have a President or a field marshal, ...Newspapers were taken over and those which were totally opposed to being incorporated into the government propaganda machinery were closed down."¹⁸

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BARRIERS

In addition to the formidable political barriers, particularly the lack of constitutional and democratic safeguards, the growth of an independent African press has been thwarted by economic and social barriers deeply embedded in African societies.

Such widespread social conditions as low literacy, widespread poverty and low per-capita income, linguistic fragmentation, endemic disease and malnutrition, as well as transportation and production problems, have exacerbated the difficulties of producing viable, profitable publications. Such conditions, which are widespread throughout the continent, are basic constraints on the growth of newspapers.

Most of the great independent newspapers of the world have flourished in free and open societies where private property was protected by law and where newspapers were profit-making ventures operating in competitive market economies. In these lands, capital was available to the publishing entrepreneur willing to take the risk of putting out a newspaper.

But in most African societies such entrepreneurs and economic conditions have been notably lacking with a few exceptions such as Kenya and Nigeria. The economic and social conditions prevailing in such capitals, for example, as

Bamako in Mali, Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, Conakry in Guinea, Niamey in Niger, Freetown in Sierra Leone, and elsewhere during the last 25 years, have not been hospitable to the growth of fledgling newspapers and other independent publications.

Publishing newspapers in tropical Africa is costly and difficult due in part to the high cost of imported newsprint which has often been rationed by governments; poor roads that have kept newspapers sales confined to cities; and the paucity of advertising revenue as well as the lack of informed, literate readers with cash to buy a newspaper.

The steadily deepening economic stagnation and political instability of recent years has not improved the economic climate for newspaper production.¹⁹

Partial exceptions to this generally bleak economic picture are found in Nairobi where two of the best newspapers in Africa continued to be published by foreign expertise and capital: The Standard (owned by Lonrho, the mainly British conglomerate with investments elsewhere in Africa) and the Daily Nation papers, financed by the Aga Khan whose Ismaeli sect has many followers in East Africa. With large African staffs, the papers serve both the large expatriate community as well the urban educated Africans.

Nairobi, financial and commercial center for East Africa, is along with Abidjan, one of the two major commercial centers of tropical Africa. Nairobi was where the enterprising Hilary Ng'weno, one time editor of the Daily Nation, built up his string of newspapers and magazines. Ng'weno's group of publications was the most impressive and almost the lone example in black Africa of private non-government newspaper entrepreneurship. But President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya could not keep his hands off such independent press voices and so the government moved into part ownership of these papers.

The Daily Times of Lagos, arguably the best African newspaper on the continent, prospered for a while with part European and part African ownership, but then the government moved in and became a part owner as in Nairobi. As a result, the Daily Times became one more government-controlled outlet.

The European papers of the colonial era were financed by European capital and run by managers and journalists coming out of a European press tradition. And when the Europeans left, much of what was good (as well as bad) about their newspapers went with them. But European journalism did not leave entirely and its influence has continued in the transformed publications that remained and with the numerous African journalists who worked on those papers and were markedly influenced by British, French or American journalistic traditions.

The European papers---East African Standard, Daily Times, Dakar-Matin, The Rhodesian Herald---were hothouse transplants in a few colonial enclaves such as Nairobi, Dakar, Lagos, and Salisbury. The indigenous African publications have found it much more difficult to take root and grow.

TRAINING AND AID PROGRAMS

Because of these political and economic barriers to press development, the various educational and training programs for African journalists over the past 25 years have been largely ineffective. Today, while Unesco and its International Program for the Development of Communications (IPDC) are moving ahead to aid the development of media and to train journalists and communicators for the Third World, it's easy to forget all that was done in the 1950s and 1960s to aid the media and train journalists.²⁰ Numerous training programs, of which the IPI program in Nairobi was probably the best, have had little lasting influence in improving the quality of journalism in tropical Africa.

Why? You train a journalist for six months or two years but what of the context in which he works? Poor newspapers with ill-qualified colleagues, meager salaries and low social esteem do not provide an environment that produces good journalists. Most African journalists, who enjoy little social status in their own societies, could make more money driving a taxi. Moreover, politics and political pressures often drive the best editors out of the business. A central problem of African journalism is to improve the media themselves as well as the professional competence of journalists and mass communicators, but in the social and political conditions of Africa today this is exceedingly difficult to accomplish. The barriers to improvement are too formidable.

That is why European press groups have had a comparatively more lasting influence, especially the Mirror papers, East African Standard, and the Argus papers of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. These newspapers provided a useful environment in which a journalist could work and learn journalism. This experience was relevant to experiences that African journalists had when they traveled or studied in Britain, the United States or France. Many of Africa's excellent black journalists, and there have been quite a few, learned what newspapering was all about from the European papers. The concepts of freedom of the press and other professional standards and ethics were internalized by these black journalists. Africans, on and off the European papers, may have disagreed sharply with the politics of the East African Standard or the Rhodesian Herald, but these papers, as well as those flown in from overseas, provided important models of what journalism could be.

On the other hand, aid efforts by West and East European nations, either bilaterally or through Unesco, UN agencies, etc., to build African newspapers

and other media with printing presses, transmitters, broadcasting equipment, "bricks and mortar" for training centers, and university communication schools such as at Lagos, etc. have had only limited success and did not result in more effective media because of barriers cited.

That's why I think that efforts of Unesco to build African media have been so generally fruitless and why the colonial and "neo-colonial" efforts, clearly commercial though they may have been, of European newspaper publishers in colonial Africa made far more of an impact, and a lasting contribution at that, on African journalism than have Unesco and other bilateral aid and training efforts.

WHY THE PRESS FAILED TO DEVELOP

On the basis of this analysis of the press in colonial and independent Africa, I suggest the following explanation of why the soil of Africa has been so infertile that the newspaper press has been unable to flourish.

This explanation, which is a restatement of the argument presented, is given as a series of propositions:

1. As we have seen, the daily newspaper is essentially a European import or transplant that came to Africa with the French, the British, the Portuguese, the Belgians, the Spanish, the Italians, and the Germans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The newspaper as a cultural artifact spread along with other "European" influences such as roads, railroads, Christian churches and missions, schools, literacy in European languages, legal systems, petty commerce, etc. throughout the European colonies. (A similar cultural transfer of British journalism to a colonial setting took place during the British Raj in India with perhaps more important and longer lasting results.)

2. These European newspapers prospered in colonial administrative centers where the colonizers or the settlers were most numerous or most dominant as in Cape Town, Nairobi, Lagos, Accra, Freetown, Salisbury (now Harare), Dakar, Abidjan, and Johannesburg. European journalism provided the "models" both in technology and format as well as content, delineating what a newspaper should be. For the few Africans involved with newspapers, these papers defined what journalism is and how it should be practiced. Those influences persist.

3. Historically, the best and most influential newspapers in Africa were those in British colonies mainly serving the British settlers, and yet the British colonizers showed more tolerance and forbearance when Africans started their own newspapers for very different reasons---to voice complaints against Whitehall, to organize political parties, to espouse nationalism, and finally, to fight for independence. The career of Nnamdi Azikiwe provides a good example of this process.²¹

The experience in colonial French Africa was different because the French had long forbade Africans from owning and publishing newspapers. Hence, 14 nations of former French West and Equatorial Africa today have little in the way of an African journalistic tradition. What press there is in francophone Africa bears the distinct imprint of France.

The important newspapers of late British colonialism provided models or prototypes for African journalism and the influence of these models continues today. The one-time Daily Mirror papers---Daily Mail in Freetown, Daily Graphic in Accra, and the Daily Times in Lagos---have long since become government or party mouthpieces but they still resemble in form and style, their Fleet Street prototypes. Much the same impact was had by the East African Standard group of papers, which earlier were edited for English settlers in East Africa, and still influence journalism today in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.

4. African (or non-European) journalism emulated the European models because that was all they had and that was what Africans were taught. And the best African newspapers were those found earlier in British West Africa, Kenya and East Africa, British Central and Southern Africa.

5. The daily newspaper, a fragile foreign implant in the harsh African environment, has done better in an environment of comparative freedom or independence from official or governmental intrusion. Economic freedom and opportunity were important as well.

Despite controls and restraints they contended with, newspapers in Africa have always been political or partisan in that they invariably espouse special interests or causes -- The East African Standard espousing claims of British settlers against the aroused Kikuyus, The Star arguing for British miners against the Boer republic of the Transvaal at the turn of the century; Azikiwe's West Africa Pilot and other papers demanding independence for Africans from Britain, and so on.

But newspapers in Africa have historically been the most effective when they have been comparatively free and independent.

6. Conversely, government control of the press by independent African states has been a distinct disservice to African journalism and has usually resulted in dull, obeisant, fawning newspapers. Government/party newspapers in such one-party states as Ghana under Nkrumah, Nyerere's Tanzania, Kaunda's Zambia, and elsewhere, have uniformly been sleep walking automatons bearing little resemblance to the lively publications of the pre-independence period.

The one-party state, often espousing "African Socialism", has not produced effective and viable newspapers, or broadcasting media for that matter. Further, the new governments have harassed or repressed the few effective news

media that operated at the time of independence -- the foreign owned press and independently owned African papers. Independent Africa's hopes for independent and vigorous newspapers were dashed during the first years of political independence.

7. So clearly today, 25 years after independence, the best newspapers in Africa are those where the "European" influences---whether in ownership, personnel, orientation, readers, format and content, as well as relative independence from government control or harassment---remain the strongest. Examples are the Daily Nation and The Standard of Nairobi, Daily Times of Lagos under the late civilian government, the English-language papers of South Africa, and the Argus papers of Zimbabwe before they were taken over by the Mugabe government.

8. As a result, daily newspapers have had little impact on the economic development and political integration of the new nations. Newspapers remain "European" in that they are elite institutions speaking to that minority who live in the cities, are educated, literate, and generally run the government or are involved in the modern sector. This is obviously an important audience but it's not a broad public and hence newspapers continue as an elite, not mass, medium. Newspapers do not effectively reach out into the countryside where most Africans still live. But more importantly, they do not reflect the interests of the public, especially the outsiders who are not well served by their governments.

9. Daily newspapers tend to flourish in situations of political freedom and stability and in prospering market economies as well. The media (including imported French publications) do much better in capitalistic Ivory Coast than in neighboring Ghana; media prosper in laissez faire Kenya, but languish in the socialistic disaster of Tanzania.

In short, the daily newspaper has not "taken hold" in Africa as a firmly rooted African institution. Despite the valiant efforts of many able and dedicated African journalists from Freetown to Lagos to Kampala to Lusaka to Johannesburg, the great majority of governments of Africa will not tolerate independent, outspoken newspapers.

Those who have led Africa for the past quarter century have generally shown a marked intolerance, if not hostility, toward independent newspapers. But just as important, the new African societies have not provided legal and constitutional safeguards for those exercising rights of speech and press. This is, of course, a problem generally for minorities throughout Africa, because "minorities" are often outsider ethnic groups who lack political power or access to government.

FAILURES OF COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT THEORY

The best and most highly regarded newspapers in the world today are found in those nations with democratic and constitutional governments and free market economies. Nations ruled by law, that show concern for civil liberties and human rights, go hand and hand with good journalism. The best newspapers then are in the West, especially in such places as the United States, Britain, Scandinavia, Western Europe, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Quality of newspapers varies widely within these countries, of course, but here is where the New York Times, Le Monde, Neue Zurcher Zeitung, the Guardian, Wall Street Journal, The International Herald Tribune, Sunday Times, Die Zeit, Frankfurter Allgemeine, Financial Times, et alia, are found. By these standards, the only African newspapers that can approach (but not join) this company are several English language papers in South Africa such as The Star, the Cape Times, and the late Rand Daily Mail.

And in Africa, the journalistic practices of the West, particularly of Britain and France, have spread to Africa and are still manifest today in the few good newspapers found in Nairobi, Lagos, Harare, Abidjan, and South Africa. That Western influence is found, too, of course in the format and style of radio and television broadcasting, as well as in movies, popular music, books, and other publications imported from abroad.

It's difficult to imagine what mass media would be like today in Africa without that Western influence. Without that impact -- both colonial and post or neo-colonial, African mass communication would be severely diminished. For the best of African journalism is essentially "European" journalism.

And yet a whole school of academic critics have in recent years decried this whole process of Western communication influences as "media imperialism" and have seen this incursion of Western mass communication into developing nations as a conspiracy to dominate and keep in subjugation the former colonies. They have joined calls at Unesco and elsewhere for a "New World Information Order" to right alleged communication wrongs inflicted on a passive and victimized Third World.²²

In their mass media, as in much else, the new nations are perceived as being "dependent" on Europe for their very existence and for all they know because of an insidious "one way flow of information" from North to South. The Western news agencies -- Associated Press, Reuters, Agence France Presse, and United Press International -- have been singled out for particular criticism. And yet, in the case of Africa, those nations which have kept the closest ties to Europe, such as Ivory Coast to France and Kenya to Britain, have been the most successful economically, most politically stable and have the most effective media systems. Africans who have received the greatest amount of "one way flow"

of information and cultural fare through education abroad, books and news media, technology transfer, as well as movies and television programs, etc., are the ones which have progressed and benefited most. Guinea, a nation that deliberately cut its ties with France at the time of independence, is one of the saddest examples of economic stagnation and retrogression, in part because it chose to isolate itself from Western information flows.

In earlier days, scholars lavishly praised the socialist experiments of Nkrumah in Ghana, Toure in Guinea, and Nyerere in Tanzania, but pointedly ignored what Houphouet Boigny was doing in Abidjan to continue French involvement in the Ivoirien economy or what Jomo Kenyatta was doing in Nairobi to hold onto British capital and expertise as well as trained manpower.

In African studies there has been a strong bent toward socialist approaches and even after such experiments failed, in Africa and elsewhere, there has been little effort at reevaluations of these "false starts." The ideological blinders worn by so many scholars have prevented them from seeing what has happened. These scholars emulate and refine each other's arguments but few have first hand experience of what happens to mass media trying to develop under the harsh authoritarianism of one-party and military rule. As a result, their "theories" seem far removed from the real world and are often ridiculed by journalists and others who know the realities of contemporary Africa.

Recently, however, there has been less blaming of Europe for "underdeveloping Africa" (as one book title has it) and more finger pointing at the African governments and leaders themselves.²³

It is now apparent, too, that the centralized, government/party control of mass media, the ineffective use of media as instruments and tools of development, etc. and the suppression of competing voices or of even mild

dissent (as has happened so often) is not going to produce good newspapers or many readers who are interested in what those papers have to say.²⁴

By the 1980s, it became apparent that the centralized one-party state, or its variant, the military junta, had not produced effective newspapers or broadcasting services of a very high order. As a result, media have contributed little to development efforts. One is hard pressed to name a single government or party-controlled newspaper anywhere in Africa that is really much good or that has been very effective in aiding development efforts.

The developmental concept of the press, which is closely allied to the precepts of African socialism, has to a great extent become a rationalization or justification for authoritarian controls of a society. When one looks closely at what an official paper says or does not say, one sees the political control (not development goals) is its *raison d'être*. Such newspapers do not provide a useful debate and discussion of pressing public issues much less an informed criticism and check on official abuses. Their main function is to maintain oligarchies in power.²⁵

The free press model for development of media is rarely if ever mentioned among the scholars of communication and development. The conspicuous success of Hong Kong is rarely cited as a model for developing media in the Third World to emulate. An in-depth study of what has happened to the media in the free-wheeling open society of Hong Kong would provide marked contrast to the African experience. More detailed case studies of Third World successes and failures and perhaps less theorizing are needed.

The dominant paradigm of communication and development studies which has been associated with the names of Lerner, Schramm, Pye, Pool, Frey, and other American social scientists has come under a good deal of criticism by the

critical or neo-Marxist scholars who have pompously announced that it has been rejected and, at best, has had its day.²⁶

But has it? Perhaps just the conditions that produced the model -- America's mammoth and idealistic efforts to aid the development of the Third World in the 1960s have greatly changed. Loss of faith in the effectiveness of foreign aid and in the ability of African governments to deal effectively with their own problems has led to widespread disillusionment in planned and controlled programs of social change and the role that communication may play in development and modernization.

Certain aspects of that model of communication and development certainly can be criticized as too deterministic, as too optimistic and perhaps naive, too unilinear, too generalized with too little concern for local problems and barriers to development, too much emphasis on a strong central government and the idea of harnessing communication in many forms to aid development.

A major shortcoming of such studies is that they have tended to ignore the impact of politics and political coercion on mass communication, particularly the press. Barton's book is a strong antidote to the social theorists who ignore the real world when spinning their theories. Official hostility and repression have been major reasons that free and independent newspapers have atrophied in Africa, and yet this factor has often been glossed over by social scientists.²⁷

Still there is much of value in the dominant paradigm, and I believe the research tradition has been unfairly criticized in many ways by critical theorists who are much less rigorous in their own research and do not base their conclusions on hard evidence as have the scholars they criticize.

The basic underlying thesis: that media systems grow with social systems and that communication is both an indicator and a contributor to development

still holds true. Development contributes to communication and communication in turn aids development. That basic proposition is still valid and has not been successfully refuted. Any yet the African experience teaches us that local cultural, political, and social conditions can greatly affect that pace and manner of development. "Development" is a much more complex and difficult process than earlier thought.

Africa reminds us that the barriers or obstacles to communication development, including an expanded press, can be so formidable that little development, in the Western sense, takes place and what there is, seems little affected by the inadequate and rudimentary media that are in place. In Tanzania, a nation beset by deep economic stagnation, the meager government-controlled media system appears to have had little impact of any kind on national development.

Emile McAnany's views about the importance of "structural problems" and their political consequences as impediments to development are quite relevant to the failures of the press to grow in Africa.²⁸ In the case of Africa, the "structural problems" -- poverty, disease, hunger, illiteracy, ethnicity, linguistic diversity, rudimentary economic systems, subsistence farming, ineffective and corrupt political controls -- are so pervasive in many nations, that the meager media have foundered.

Moreover, Africa teaches us the persistence of traditionalism. Traditional ways of doing things are barriers to communication and development that I personally think have been much underrated and, at times, ignored.

Modernization is coming in and changing things, mainly in a few urban areas, but at a much slower rate than is generally perceived. Beneath that veneer of Western education and dress of the bright, articulate African bureaucrat or

newspaper editor is a traditional African man with strong continuing ties to his extended family, his clan, his tribe, and to his weltanschauung.

And in matters of communication, Africans have long had informal ways of exchanging information and these continue to be used. And perhaps a major shortcoming of mass communication, including newspapers, is the failure to tie modern communication onto the traditional channels of communication. Maybe that is why the newspaper is still today a "European" or foreign institution that has not yet become an integral part of the social fabric of Africa.

CONCLUSION

An Africanist geographer, George H.T. Kimble, said years ago that Africa is a bad place for a theorizer or generalizer because it has proved so many of them wrong. And this, it appears, seems to be the case with a good deal of communication and development research; so much of what has been written and theorized seems quite inappropriate or inapplicable to Africa's experience with mass communication.

The problem for some communication scholars is that they try to impose on Africa and the Third World certain frameworks and predispositions that have been developed elsewhere, often in those pristine academic corridors where Marxism is still a living faith, although Marx's ideas have been long ago rejected by the real world of politics and economics. For example, some will argue that mass communication in Africa has been victimized and thwarted by a conspiracy of multi-national corporations. But yet anyone looking at mass communication can see that the few newspapers of value in Africa, and of usefulness to African readers, are the very papers with European roots and traditions. Or such scholars fail to perceive that educated Africans who try to keep up with the

outside world and with Africa itself rely on "multi-national media" such as the BBC World Service, Voice of America, International Herald Tribune, Le Monde, Time, Newsweek, etc.

Some, too, argue that the old metropolises -- France, Britain, and Belgium -- are deliberately keeping down and exploiting their old colonies. But yet the most "neo-colonial" of the new nations, Ivory Coast and Kenya, have been relatively more successful politically and economically than their neighbors.

Those countries that earlier declared their independence from their colonial masters, notably Guinea and Tanzania, are two of the more conspicuous failures in Africa today. But leftist oriented scholars, who refuse to concede any virtues to free enterprise and market incentives, merely look the other way and find something else to talk about.

For this writer, the starting point for understanding the press in Africa is to know the history of the newspaper on that continent. The role of European journalists and newspaper proprietors was central in starting the press of Africa and giving it the form and substance it has retained to this day. The daily newspaper came from Europe at first to serve the Europeans and to this day, remains a foreign import not fully integrated into African society. The indigenous African press, especially in the pre-independence years, was important in mobilizing public opinion and organizing political parties, but it proved to be short-lived because the new African governments did not want independent and critical newspapers and, in effect, strangled the young African press in its cradle.

Further, to understand the role of the newspaper in Africa requires a close examination of the political, social, and economic factors operating within and between various countries. To me, this is the only way to understand how and

why the press has or has not taken root in Africa. This is a case study approach and a number of such studies are needed, especially for the francophone countries as well as for Mozambique, Angola, and Zaire.

In sum, what can be said about the false start for Africa's press?

For one thing, everyone expected too much too soon. Twenty five years is just a blip in human history. Independent Africa needs more time to enter the modern world, and when it does, it will be on African terms, not those of the West.

Africa was expected to develop and modernize along European lines and that just has not happened. Perhaps it can be argued that in capitals such as Nairobi, Abidjan, or Dakar, Africa has "Europeanized" but not "modernized." Capitalism and socialism are both European importations, and although most African nations opted for the latter, neither approach has brought real economic growth and political stability to Africa. Perhaps an African way -- one more in tune with African traditions and history -- has to be found.

Secondly, I believe that the persistence of traditional ways, especially the powerful forces of ethnicity, were vastly underrated by those guiding the modernization of Africa. Growth has been much slower than expected. In the future, significant and sustained development probably will come in only a few places.

Most significant social change is occurring in South Africa, repugnant as that is to all who abhor apartheid. And yet no other African metropolis can match Johannesburg for dynamic economic and social change for Africans, as well as whites. The "white tribe" of Afrikaners and their English-speaking supporters and opponents have produced a dynamic and powerful state that is dominating central and southern Africa despite the deep hostility to the

National Party regime. That is a reality that black South Africans are being forced to live with as they inexorably move toward majority rule in South Africa.

As a student of mass communication who believes in the value and importance of free and independent journalism, it has been dispiriting to watch despots and arbitrary political leaders harass, repress and reject efforts of African journalists to do their jobs and to play a role in public affairs. The African press is not a free press; in most nations, the few daily newspapers are kept and controlled instruments of unelected and unpopular governments which can only be changed by a coup d'etat. And when things get bad enough, that is the way governments usually are changed.

The handwriting on the wall for the African press was clear in the early 1960s, when it became increasingly apparent that the one-party state in Africa was not a new kind of participatory democracy but just the old-fashioned authoritarianism that the world has known for a long time. And the African press has fared even worse under military regimes.

A vital, free, and effective African press that truly serves the needs of the African peoples is still a long way off in the future. To help bring that about, at least it is important to understand clearly how the press become what it is.

FOOTNOTES

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2. See David Lamb, *The Africans*, New York: Random House, 1982; Martin Meredith, *The First Dance of Freedom: Black Africa in the Postwar Era*, New York: Harper and Row, 1984; Geoffrey Wheatcroft, "The Anguish of Africa," *The New Republic*, January 9 & 16, 1984, pp. 18-23.
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4. See Ainslie, *op. cit.*; James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963, p. 186.
5. William Hachten and C. Anthony Giffard, *The Press and Apartheid: Repression and Propaganda in South Africa*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984.
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8. Arno Huth, *Communications Media in Tropical Africa*, Washington, D.C.: International Cooperation Administration, 1961.
9. U.S. Information Agency, *Communications Data Book for Africa*, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966.
10. Hachten, *Muffled Drums*, p. 24.
11. Barton, *The Press of Africa*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

12. George Kurian (ed.), *World Press Encyclopedia* (2 vols.), New York: Facts on File, 1981.
13. Quoted in William Hachten, "Newspapers in Africa: Change or Decay?", *Africa Report*, December 1970, p. 25.
14. See Hachten, *Muffled Drums*; Barton, *The Press of Africa*; and Dennis Wilcox, *Mass Media in Black Africa*, New York: Praeger, 1975.
15. See William Hachten, "Ghana's Press Under the NRC," *Journalism Quarterly*, 52:3 Autumn 1975, pp. 458-64.
16. See Lamb, *The Africans*, pp. 244-245.
17. Ibid.
18. Hilary Ng'weno, "The Third World Dilemma: Can a State Press be Free?", *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi) June 22, 1979.
19. See Wheatcroft, *op. cit.*; Xan Smiley, "Misunderstanding Africa," *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1982, pp. 70-79.
20. Hachten, *Muffled Drums*, pp. 132-140.
21. Sam Idemili, "The West African Pilot and the Movement for Nigerian Nationalism," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1980.
22. See Mustapha Masmoudi, *The New World Information Order*, Paris: Unesco International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, 1978.
23. See Wheatcroft, *op. cit.*, and Lamb, *op. cit.*
24. For a description of the developmental press concept, see Hachten, *World News Prism*, pp. 72-75; and Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory*, pp. 94-96.
25. See Hachten, "Ghana's Press Under the NRC," *op. cit.*

26. See Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society*; Fred Frey, "Communication and Development," pp. 337-432 in *The Handbook of Communication*; and Everett Rogers, *Communication and Development: Critical Perspectives*.
27. Barton, *The Press of Africa*, op. cit.
28. Emile McAnany, "From Modernization and Diffusion to Dependency and Beyond: Theory and Practice in Communication for Social Change." (Unpublished paper, University of Texas.)